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AGRICULTURAL REVIEW

Nova Scotia Agriculture - 1991

Agriculture in Nova Scotia is the economic backbone of many of the Province's rural communities. The 4,000 farm operations in Nova Scotia represent a capital investment of over $1 Billion and generates employment for over 14,000 Nova Scotians.

Weather was a popular topic of conversation amongst farmers in 1991. From early May through mid-June, there were up to 14 frosts in some regions of the province. Temperatures in mid-May reached a low of -9° Celsius. These cold temperatures were followed by extreme drought in July and August.

These two factors combined resulted in significantly lower yields of tree fruits, strawberries, vegetables, grain and forage crops in the province. Blueberries were the exception, yielding 27.9 million pounds, the largest crop ever.

At the farm level, 1991 farm cash receipts in Nova Scotia are estimated to be $308 Million, down slightly from 1990.

Income from the sale of crops, including horticultural products and grain, is estimated at $75 Million, with livestock products marketed worth $222.6 Million

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Miscellaneous receipts to the industry totalled $10.4 Million.

At the retail level, food prices purchased from the store rose by just over 2% while the cost of food purchased from restaurants increased by nearly 11%. Prices paid to farmers decreased by 1%.

For 1992, farm cash receipts are forecasted at $317 Million given normal weather and market conditions. At the retail level, lower price increases are anticipated.

Throughout 1991 ongoing international trade negotiations generated considerable discussion. On November 13, Premier Donald Cameron, then Minister of Agriculture and Marketing George Archibald, and the President of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture, held a joint press conference in Halifax to publicly state the Province's support for Supply Management and the Canadian position at the GATT negotiating table.

The Nova Scotia Beef Commission, which was established in 1990, and consists of beef producers and abattoir operator, a representative of the wholesale/retail trade, and NSDA&M staff released its first report. This document provides an assessment of the industry, identifies opportunities for growth, and makes recommendations to government on initiatives for further developing the industry.

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Greater production of top quality calves is basic to the industry, allowing for a larger number of feeder and slaughter cattle to be marketed.

A major study on agricultural labour issues in Nova Scotia was also released. The study surveyed almost 1,000 horticulture and dairy farmers in the Province, as well as 400 farm workers. The report notes that the main challenge facing the farm sector is competition from other industries for the available work force. To compete, farmers will have to enhance the viability of the jobs they offer and become more effective labour managers.

A new agriculture industry was started in Nova Scotia in 1991. During the year, regulations were established that would permit deer farmers to operate in the Province. Regulations allow for the farming of elk, red deer and fallow deer, species which are not native to the Province. In addition, a six-member Deer Farm Advisory Committee was established. To date, three permits have been issued for the operation of deer farms in Nova Scotia.

Continued depressed commodity prices combined with relatively higher production costs have placed Nova Scotia hog producers and related processing industries in a difficult position. Hog numbers in

1991 are down marginally. The Nova Scotia hog industry accounts for 10% of farm gate sales, so stabilizing this industry is a priority in Nova Scotia.

1991 also saw a number of federal/provincial agreements signed in support of Nova Scotia agriculture, including an eighteen-month extension to ALFI, the Land Management Assistance Program, agreements for farm management and environmental sustainability and two new income stabilization initiatives.

1991 also saw increases in the number of students enrolled at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College. Following a 17% increase in 1991, there was an additional 9% increase in the 1991-92 school year. It is estimated that by 1992-93, NSAC enrollments will total 750 students. The College, with its annual research budget of $3 Million now has the 3rd largest research fund of any university in Nova Scotia.

Private industry from as far away as Japan is now commissioning the NSAC to conduct research on their behalf. In addition, the College now has ongoing international development projects valued at $1 Million per year.

Looking ahead to 1992, major issues to be faced by the agriculture industry include the continued discussions over the GATT negotiations and the need to stabilize farm incomes.